

**Public Affairs
Support Annex
Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan**

Lead Agency: Office of the Governor

Supporting Departments/Agencies: Division of Emergency Management

I. PURPOSE

- A. To provide guidance and procedures for coordinating emergency public information efforts in support of the state's response during disasters and emergencies.
- B. Provide for the effective collection, monitoring, management, and dissemination of accurate, useful, and timely public information to the media and for the public during disasters and emergencies.
- C. Provide long-term public education efforts related to hazard awareness, family protection planning, and emergency self-help.

II. SITUATION

- A. During a disaster, the means of dispersing public information to victims at the site may be severely affected by overwhelming demand and/or damage to local media caused by a disaster. State assistance may be required to supply critical information to victims, responders, recovery personnel, and members of the media. In addition, following a disaster, information may often be vague, erroneous, or contradictory. Local, State, Tribal, and Federal public information personnel will work in cooperation and coordination with one another to ensure that precise, correct, and verified emergency public information is released to the public and representatives of media.
- B. ASSUMPTIONS
 - 1. The public needs timely and accurate information for protection of life and property during response to, and recovery from a disaster or emergency situation.
 - 2. The State may start an emergency public information system to augment or enhance local capabilities or when requested by a local agency. A joint information system (JIS) may be initiated by the State to report on the State's response, recovery, and or mitigation activities.

3. Local jurisdictions will provide immediate and vital information to the public regarding response and recovery activities.
4. At no time will a news release from any agency conflict with news releases from local government.
5. The Governor's Office has lead responsibility as the official spokesperson for State actions.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The following systems and procedures will be applicable to the response and recovery phase of any disaster or emergency situation.

A. Joint Information System (JIS)

1. To reduce inaccuracies and misinformation, the State will use a joint information system (JIS) to coordinate information with participating local, State, and Federal agencies. Based on the urgency of the situation and the need for inter-agency cooperation, agencies should attempt to coordinate emergency public information through the Governor's Office.
2. In a disaster, the SEOC becomes the focal point for the receipt of information and therefore, is a logical location for the preparation and distribution of emergency public information if so deemed by the Governor's Office.
3. The lead Public Information Officer (PIO) identified for the specific disaster will be responsible for those functions identified under B.1. below until such time as a Joint Information Center is established.

B. Joint Information Center (JIC)

1. The Governor's Office and, in the case of a State declared disaster; the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) may elect to conduct public information functions in a single physical location to form an emergency Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC may include local, State, Federal and private sector agencies. Once operational, local, State, Federal and other agencies should coordinate news releases concerning emergency response and recovery activities through the JIC.
2. Emergency public information activities may take place at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), a disaster field location, another state agency, or other locations as appropriate.

3. Public Information Officer (PIO) Coordination Teams

- a. Public Information Officer (PIO) Coordination Teams consist of representatives from the Governor's Office, DOLA/DEM, specific State, tribal, local, Federal, and private sector agencies; are responsible for gathering verifying, and producing information for dissemination to the media and public such as new releases, background information, fact sheets, public service announcements, briefings, and news conference materials; respond to questions and requests from the media; release information to media and public via news release, briefings, news conferences, interviews, public service announcements, etc.; respond to questions and requests from the media; release information to media and public via news releases, briefings, news conferences, interviews, public service announcements, etc.; arrange for media interview, tours, and special requests; and staff the media center as appropriate.
- b. Participating agencies should assign one lead representative to coordinate information from their agency with other team members before it is released to the public.
- c. A Media Center consists of spokespersons from the Governor's Office (press secretary) or designated representative, State Coordinating Officer, CDEM Director, technical experts, and representatives from appropriate state, federal, and local agencies as appropriate; and provides a central location for media briefings, conferences, and information distribution.
- d. To the extent possible, information should be coordinated through the PIO Coordination Team and with appropriate agencies before it is released to the media. Media Center staff should make written records of pertinent information released at briefings and conferences. Staff should remain at the media center, as necessary, while the SEOC is operational.
- e. A Public/Media Inquiry Center provides response, recovery, and mitigation information to people affected by the disaster via telephone "hotlines;" responds to questions using official, verified, and releasable information; refers calls as appropriate to various local, State, Federal, volunteer, and private sector agencies; maintains current and updated information records; maintains a record of questions,

responses, and actions; monitors radio and television stations and informs the PIO Coordination Team of inaccuracies; and identifies rumors and misinformation and brings to attention of PIO Coordination Team.

- f. An inquiry center may be established and staffed with appropriate State and Federal personnel when initial response from the disaster is concluding and recovery actions are beginning.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

A. Office of the Governor

1. Responsible for the dissemination of timely, accurate public information during a disaster or emergency.
2. Provide information and instructions to the public for obtaining disaster relief and assistance.
3. Review and approve all information releases.
4. Submit information releases to the Governor or his representative for approval.
5. Function as Chief of PIO Teams at the SEOC or other operating location.
6. Assist and maintain liaison with the media.
7. Maintain liaison with the Governor and his representatives.
8. Establish a briefing and information release schedule.
9. Provide administrative and logistical support.
10. Maintain a record of actions.

B. DOLA/DEM

1. Provide information and instructions to the public for obtaining disaster relief and assistance.
2. Coordinate information releases through a JIS or JIC.
3. Activate the Emergency Alert System (EAS) if necessary.

4. Release emergency public information from the SEOC until a determination to establish a JIC had been made and the JIC is operational.
5. Notify PIOs designated to staff the JIC.
6. Assign one lead representative as a PIO Coordination Team member.
7. Provide personnel as required by the disaster emergency.
8. Notify FEMA and other agencies as appropriate.
9. Gather, verify, and coordinate information regarding the disaster situation and activities.
10. Prepare news releases, fact sheets, background information, and briefing materials.
11. Coordinate news briefings and conferences in cooperation with the Governor's Office.
12. Provide facilities, equipment, support, and resources at the SEOC.
13. Provide administrative and logistic support.
14. Maintain a record of actions.

C. State Agencies

1. Coordinate information releases through a JIS or JIC.
2. As requested, send representatives to the JIC.
3. Assign one lead representative as a PIO Coordination Team member.
4. Gather and verify information from your organization.
5. Prepare news releases, fact sheets, background information, and briefing materials.
6. Cooperate with the dissemination of information.
7. Provide administrative and logistic support.

8. Maintain a record of actions.

D. Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) allows local jurisdictions to broadcast an alert only in that specific jurisdiction. For more information regarding EAS see ESF #2 (Communications).